

New Adventures in a Related Medium

by Ellen Mandelbaum



Gilding Detail



"Chartres"



"Liverpool" (detail)

Gilding, like stained glass, captures light and sends it back to the viewer. When I was assigned to make panels for an exhibit in Liverpool and Chartres, mica gilding on Lexan was the obvious choice. It would be light, unbreakable, and inexpensive and would encourage me to be free.

Stained glass had been described to me many years ago as "painting with light." This process is very similar. Once heated, the gelatin mixed with gold-colored mica gave me the freedom to use the gesture of my hand to sprinkle it across the surface of the lexan plastic. This was not very different from the way that I had handled glass paint. I could be spontaneous and free.

For *Australia Ancient Grasses*, I printed an image of the large twisted trees, struggling to survive in the Outback. For *Chartres*, I printed an image from my camera called Inland Waterway and centered it on the panel, surrounded by gold-colored mica. Other gilded panels didn't have computer photographs, but the gilding stretched out in every direction to take over the large space. I moved my arm in a large, generous gesture and then came back into the image with an old abrasive scrubbing brush to wash away some of the surface.

The mica was thin, then thick, and then opened up to a wider gesture. I felt this opened up the expressivity of the work. Ultimately, I backed it with black cardboard, which was a beautiful contrast against the gold color. The 8-foot-by-6-foot lexan had been picked up in a friend's mini-van from Canal Street in Manhattan. The materials for gilding can be purchased at New York Central Art Supply. Along with gold products, they offer a wide variety of mica colors and gelatin, which comes in sheets of triangles.